

# FREE CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH

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The Proposed New Book of Church Government, from a friendly standpoint.

The last number of the Southern Presbyterian Review in its account of the Memphis Assembly, presents, as we think, a very fair view of the new book of Church Order.

As this question excites some interest at present, we lay before our readers in full this Southern statement of the case:

Taking up this part of the report, to examine it a little in detail, we notice that the whole of chapter I. of present Form is omitted. Dr. Baird said, well, the reason of this omission was that the chapter was nothing but "an apology for our being Presbyterians." Moreover, whoever will look carefully and candidly at this chapter must discover that it smacks in sundry places very disagreeably of Congregationalism, and also that the principles of value which it does hold forth, are all contained in the other parts of the Form.

The first chapter of the proposed Form presents us with a statement of the doctrine of church government, under five heads, which appears to exhaust the whole of it. The various paragraphs of this chapter give precise definitions of each of these five heads, viz: 1. The Church: 2. Its members: 3. Its officers: 4. Its courts: 5. Its orders.

The second chapter gives us, in four sections, our Presbyterian doctrine in full respecting the first of these heads. From the Westminster Form is borrowed that sublime scriptural statement of the kingship and headship of Christ. The *ius divinum presbyterii* is distinctly declared. The Church, considered in the threefold aspect of universal, denominational, and particular, is defined. Church power is set forth according to its nature and limitations as presented in the Scriptures. And the congregation as the particular church, for the sake of distinctness, is fully set forth.

The third chapter, we think, will strongly commend itself to the Church generally, for the manner in which it deals with the little ones of the flock.

The fourth chapter treats in full of teaching elders or ministers of the word, whose office is the first in the Church, both for dignity and usefulness; of ruling elders, who are (as well as ministers) true natural presbyters; and of deacons, whose jurisdiction is not over persons, but over things, who are the servants of the church, and of the church of Christ.

The fifth chapter treats of the communion, and of the bread and the wine as the elements of the sacrament. In fact, many suppose that is the chief part of their service. On the contrary, it is no part whatever of the elder's office, as such. To the minister alone belongs the administration of the sacraments. Any hand may pass the bread or the wine after they are delivered to the communicants by the minister. In the Church of Scotland, elders and deacons both assist at the table, as Pardon tells us. Book I., Title viii; Book II., Title iv.

We do not understand the proposed Form as exclusively affixing this service to the office of the deacon. We should oppose any such view of the diaconate. But we believe that deacons may serve the Lord's table as well as the other two tables named. And we like any measure that will help to set before the church her teaching elders and her ruling elders in their true positions—the former charged with that highest of all offices—preaching both in the word and in the sacraments; and the latter charged with ruling the Church, and not with serving tables any more than the other class of presbyters.

The appointment by the sessions of godly women to the diaconal functions, is allowed under the proposed Form. We rejoice at it. Protestants greatly need such an institution. The Scriptures, we believe, call for it.

The fifth chapter treats of the courts of the Church. The proposed Form defines the quorum so that the presence of both classes of elders is necessary in every court. We believe this is right. It accords with the genius and spirit of our whole system. At the same time, let it be observed that no one could maintain that the proceedings of any court would necessarily be invalidated in any case where the ruling elders might be absent. The definition of the quorum is designed merely to set forth what is needful to constitute a regular Church court, but irregularity and invalidity are not the same thing.

The proposed Form adopts very fully the idea of ecclesiastical commissions, with certain wise and wholesome limitations. We believe our church is prepared to adopt very cordially this feature of the proposed Form.

There are sundry minor regulations proposed in this chapter differing from the arrangements of the present Form, which will commend themselves to our brethren.

The same may be said of chapter six, which relates to orders. We have observed nothing in this chapter which we suppose can rouse any opposition, except the imposition of hands by the session in the ordination of ruling elders. But the proposed Form sets forth ordination in its true scriptural light as the act of a church court, and it also sets forth the church court in its true scriptural right as composed always of presbyters of two classes. All the rest is just a matter of logic. We feel confident that the necessary conclusion will be admitted generally, and the Church will agree that the ordination of ruling el-

ders ought to be by the session. Even deacons were ordained with imposition of hands by the apostles; and why should this ceremony be omitted in the case of elders? Moreover our doctrine on this subject is not that of Rome. We do not make orders in any sense a sacrament. It does not belong to ministers as such. It always is an act of government by the rulers of the Church.

The proposed Form closes with such provision for changes in the constitution of the Church as we must say appears to us wise and reasonable and safe.

"Binding the Sheaves"—Problems for Christian Philanthropy to Solve.

We received through Messrs. Davidson & Robinson, among other new books from Robert Carter & Brothers, publishers, the other day, a small 16mo volume of 400 pages, entitled "Binding the Sheaves"—being a story illustrative of the power of Christian philanthropy to reform the outcast and vicious. And if we ought to be ashamed at the confession that it cheated us out of a whole evening's work, when we had an abundance of more important matters than story-reading to occupy our time, we have at least this apology to offer, that the reading suggested some things which perhaps it would be well for us, and for Christian men and women generally, to be gravely considering.

The general subject cannot be more forcibly presented than as it is illustrated in the following, among many similar pictures in this story, portraying the state of feeling which poverty and suffering no doubt often generate in a child's soul:

"What did you do after your mother died?" I asked, anxious to hear the story while she seemed inclined to tell it. "Who took you then?"

"Not God," said she sharply. "He forgot there was such a child. I stayed where my father put me, sometimes in one home, sometimes in another. He never forgot me, but he was sick away from me, and then the money did not come to them."

"Mrs. Graham, if I had cared for me, would he have let me be beaten, because I would not lie and steal; would he have let me be sent starved to sleep on the dirty straw in the corner, because I would not beg? Would he have let me be ragged and filthy, and let me forget the name of God? My mother would not have let me be so."

"I don't see how good God was to you through it all? You did not lie, you did not steal, you did not do what you knew was wrong; you have now no such sins to be forgiven. Who kept you from them if it was not God?"

"I could not do them," said Nannette simply. "I would not. I should have been ashamed, and my father would not have owned me for his daughter."

It was touching to hear this poor child, the child of such a father, giving this reason for abstaining from sin. It was true that she did not know her father's crimes.

"And after your father ceased to come, you lived with the Irish woman until Mr. Demain found you?"

"Yes, and she was often kind to me. I think she really loved me, and after my doll was gone, and the bird died, she was all I had."

She got up and slowly left the room, and I knew for to day Nannette's story was ended.

And, on the other hand, the philosophy which, in the hearts of many Christian men, takes the place of the genuine philosophy of the gospel:

It is just exactly what you might have expected. I heard Squire Langdon say to Mr. Graham, a few days after the whole story of Aunt Thirza's fright became public. "You don't know, sir, as well as I do, sir, about bad country boys, sir. You've lived all your life in the city, sir, where you have police and all that kind of thing, sir, to help you along; but my observation is, sir—and I ought to know, as I have been a justice of the peace for twenty years, sir—that bad boys like those always grow up to make bad men, as their fathers were before them, sir. It's no use. People, when they first come into the country, sir, always bring a number of new-fangled notions with them; but, sir, I beg you to observe that they get over them. Yes, sir, I repeat it, they get over them."

I saw a peculiar smile on my husband's face; but he made no answer.

"Now the case is clear, sir," continued the erudite lawyer; "you never saw a clearer one in all your practice, I'll venture to say, sir,—that where the natural propensities are toward sin, sir, toward sin, there also may be found the line of conduct, sir. These boys inherited sin with their fathers' blood, sir; and some of them with their mothers' milk, too, sir. It's a clear case, Mr. Graham; if you keep them under for a little while, sir, they only hide the cloven foot. Sooner or later, sir, it will show itself. They can't help sinning, sir, can't help it; I repeat it, sir."

"But where sin abounded," said my husband, as Squire Langdon stopped to take breath, "grace did much more abound. That, as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace by Jesus Christ our Lord." How do you explain that text, Squire Langdon?"

"I don't explain it, sir. I am not a minister, sir, and my business is not

with exegesis, sir; but I don't calculate it means that bad boys are to be made good by any new-fashioned ways of treatment, sir."

"Very old-fashioned indeed, Squire Langdon,—by Jesus Christ our Lord." "Well, sir,—yes, sir,—of course, sir,—there is power in redemption, regeneration, free grace, and adoption by faith for even the thief on the cross; but I didn't know as all that had anything to do with picking boys up, sir, out of the very ditches, as you might say, sir, and trying to make men of them, sir, when there is no manhood in them, sir. That is, sir—a true philosophical argument, sir: and it follows, therefore, as a matter of course, sir, that whatever is not, is not, sir. I repeat it, is not, sir," and he looked triumphantly in Mr. Graham's face.

"There is precisely the point where we differ, Squire Langdon. I do not believe in 'is not, but in 'is.' I believe God gives to every poor miserable sinner that walks the earth as great a natural power to be a good and great man as to you or me. Nor do I blame many of them half as much as I pity them. In a certain sense, they seem shut out from those influences which incline the heart to seek righteousness. We know the Spirit of God can work miracles, in reaching even the most hardened under the most discouraging circumstances; but we know, too, that the divine visitant is more apt to make his abode with those who open their hearts for his reception. Now, suppose a person has never been told that there is such a thing expected of him,—suppose he has been born in a Christian land, met Christians every hour of his life without the word of warning having been uttered,—who in God's sight, is most to blame for the reckless, wicked course which he pursues? It is a delicate and a useless point to pursue, I know," he continued, "otherwise than as we put it practically. I do not suppose theologically we can ever settle it here to our entire satisfaction, it branches out into so many intricate problems; but for our own part in the continuance of this sin, certainly we can bring the question to an issue at once."

Squire Langdon was rather averse to this aspect of the thing. He had come to enjoy a little triumph, which he thought he had well earned, by being patient so long. He had been the leading illustration of a man in church and town, feeling that, in lending his illustrious name to the Lord, as a member of his church militant, he did his whole Christian duty. Always in his place in church, in every meeting, and at the preparatory always ready to contribute to the different benevolent societies, or failing of paying the largest minister's tax, until we new-comers had ignorantly outstripped him. And in reality he was a good Christian man. There had been something of reproach in our taking up the worst boys, those for whom he never even thought of praying, indeed, whose existence he would gladly have ignored if he could, and attempting to reform them.

Heretofore, the Christian men and women of the United States have had comparatively little occasion to study the great problem, what can be done to reach the utterly degraded masses of immortal creatures, whose poverty and wretchedness Satan so adroitly turns to account in filling Christian countries with a gross atheism, such as is seldom reached by even the masses of paganism itself. The immense productiveness of our new country, the wider distribution of wealth, and the abundance of remunerative employment, have prevented, to a great extent, in the United States that horrible state of things which Mr. Kay's grim statistics portray so graphically as existing among the down-trodden millions of England and Wales. Nay, even such a state of things as that which aroused the energies of Chalmers in Scotland, and has made the "poor law" problem the great *pon*s of the economists. But the tendencies of the last twenty years in this country are obviously in a direction toward a social condition similar to that in Britain. The rich are getting richer, and the poor poorer. Colossal fortunes are reared up, to stand, like the pyramids of Egypt, surrounded with desolation and ruin. The very success of the pioneer energy, thrift, and enterprise of the fathers in accumulating wealth having taken away from the children the incentives to energy, thrift, and enterprise, has tended to multiply vastly the number of those who are either unwilling or unable to heed God's great law: "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread."

Meanwhile, the process has been going on here, as in Britain, whereby the natural sympathy between capital and labor is turned into antagonism. Labor, fascinated by the glittering generalities of the atheistic social theories, organizes itself to prey upon wealth, and wealth, in turn, subsidizes mechanical skill, and fortifies itself against its adversary by substituting machine labor for hand labor. And thus the effort of labor to shirk the great law that ordains honest labor as the condition of eating bread in abundance, results in a withdrawal of the opportunity to labor that it may obtain bread.

Such was rapidly becoming the condi-

tion of things in the olden Northern States, when the atheistic theorists, adroitly turning to account the honest but ill-informed Christian philanthropism of the North, seduced it into an alliance with the atheistic socialism to overthrow the Southern labor system, under which capital and labor were one, and which stood as a wall of adamant, barring the further progress of the socialistic theories.

The effort has been successful. And now on the vast masses of labor, organized and in conflict with capital at the North, is suddenly thrown the great hungry horde of laborers from the South, where capital and labor alike have been annihilated. The consequence must obviously be a rapid deterioration and demoralization of the laboring classes of the country; and the prospect now is, that, within a very brief period, immense numbers of our population will be in the condition of the four millions in England and Wales, which Mr. Kay, in his "Social condition of the English People," describes.

It is of no use any longer to speculate as to the causes of this state of things, or to criminate or recriminate, as between North and South, touching the question where the blame lies. But it becomes a very grave question whether the Christian people of the country shall awaken at once to the perils of the situation, and educate themselves and their children for the great work which Providence seems to have thrown upon them. It is certainly a moderate estimate to put down one-fifth of our thirty odd millions of people, white and black, as now rapidly verging toward, if that many have not yet reached a state of poverty, ignorance, and irreligion like that of the four millions of England and Wales. And it remains to be seen whether our Christian people will prove equal to the emergency; whether they will accept in all its fullness the truth that the gospel is to be preached to the poor among them—even these atheistic, worse than heathen poor. And preached not merely in the sense of saying to the wretched, "Be ye warmed and be ye fed," but preached as a gospel of action; great, philanthropic action.

It is on this account that we read with interest such stories as "Binding the Sheaves," stories which present before us vividly the problem of Christian philanthropy and the efforts to solve it.

Dr. Bethune's Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Sheldon & Co., Nos. 493 and 500 Broadway, New York, brought out last year, in two beautiful 12mo volumes of some 500 pages each, the Lectures of Dr. Bethune on the Heidelberg Catechism. The work seems to have been prepared for the press by some literary friend, since the author's death; but those who are familiar with Dr. Bethune's peculiarly beautiful style, both of thought and speech, will perceive that these are generally his *ipsissima verba*, conveying his rich and suggestive thoughts.

Those who knew Dr. Bethune only as a brilliant writer and platform orator will, no doubt, like ourselves, be somewhat curious to see how one so gifted as a rhetorician, will deal with the profound doctrines of the Calvinistic Theology. For an exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism must, in the nature of the case, be, to all intents and purposes, a systematic treatise on theology. We have been equally surprised and gratified to find how fully and cordially he accepts the great doctrines of grace; and how his beautiful rhetoric clothes the profoundest of these great doctrines in a dress which we suppose must attract the attention even of those having little taste for the doctrines themselves.

On the great topics of the Fall of Man, the Mediator, the Atonement, Justification by Faith, &c., he takes his stand with the most orthodox, and maintains his positions with great force and beauty of expression.

But our readers may best judge of the merits of the work by a few extracts. We cite first from the exposition of "The Life Everlasting"—Vol 2d pp 141-2:

"It is begun by the indwelling of the same spirit which will irradiate the saints on high with divine glory. It is the Spirit of Christ which implants the image of Christ, at once the seal and sum of heavenly perfection; as by the Holy Ghost the child who now sits the man Christ Jesus on his peerless throne, 'Christ in you the hope of glory.' Hence it follows that there must be correspondent manifestations in the believer. The life eternal must show itself in the growing change of his whole nature from the death of sin. 'You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.' Thus there will be new life in our moral faculties. 'Ye are his workmanship,' says the apostle, 'created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' This is more than persuasion, more even than light. It is the

communication of a new principle. 'Ye have not chosen me,' saith our Lord, 'but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit might remain.' It is the blessed purchase of Christ for his people, and his gift to his people,—the purchase and gift of him who died for the ungodly, and those who are without strength, that he might 'save his people from their sins;' and this he does by sending his Spirit, the Holy Ghost, to beget them to a new and a holy life, which though begun and carried gradually on amidst their remaining sins and infirmities, he will by the same spirit consummate in everlasting glory. Hence the believer, though once without God in the world, not subject to the law of God, and utterly incapable of such obedience, his heart enmity against God, and his will as prone to evil as the sparks naturally fly upward, is now changed in all his aims, purposes, and desires. He loves God; he has in his heart the spirit of a child, and is conscious of a strength not his own to do the things he loves and desires to do. His love, his strength, his desires are not perfect as they should be, he is yet compassed about with infirmity, temptation, and sin; but grace is in his heart, struggling with them all, and if he is faithful at the throne of grace, daily achieving some victory, and making progress to his final perfection. The life of his soul has changed, and where it once flowed in a fearful ebb downward to death, it now takes a flood toward God and heaven. Every believer, not perhaps always, or at least not always in an equal degree, is conscious of this, and he rejoices in the gift, and in the hope of eternal life, of which it is the earnest and the assurance. But when the love of God, the law of God, the glory of God are not the ruling motives of our present life, when the direction of our desires; the aim of our hopes, are not toward the holiness of heaven, we have no warrant to expect that we shall escape the bitter pains of eternal death. The life must be begun here, or it will never be ours beyond the grave. Faith—faith the gift of God, faith fruitful of good works—alone is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.

The discussion of the "posture" in the Lord's Supper, is in Dr. Bethune's characteristic style:

4. The posture.

There can be no doubt that our Lord intended by this sacrament to present before the church a lively representation of his church united as a household of God around a family table, partaking of the same spiritual food, and united to each other because united to Christ, the institutor and master of the feast. When our Lord ordained the sacrament, he was at the head of the table of the paschal supper, and administered the bread and the wine to his disciples,—they, like himself, being in the posture common to them at their meals. The idea of a family in the communion of a household feast, is well-nigh as essential to the sacrament as that of receiving by faith the body and blood of the Lord. But a table is essential to the representation of that sacred idea; and hence the apostle speaks by inspiration of "the table of the Lord"; and the Protestant church almost universally uses the term, "the Lord's Table," as synonymous with the sacrament of the supper. It is not a supper in common (or communion), except as we gather around a table, and that in the posture we ordinarily use on such occasions of common participation. Hence our church, in common with most of the Reformed churches, sets before the people a table crowned with the holy elements, and invites the true disciples of Christ to separate themselves from the world, and gather themselves together about the table that they may sit together as a family of God.

It is to be regretted that our houses of worship are not often so constructed as to allow the setting of a table sufficiently large for all the communicants to seat themselves at. Those who have had an opportunity of being present at a communion where that method was employed will confess that the solemnity and instructiveness of the rite were greatly increased. But since this is not often feasible, painful expedients, somewhat opposite in character, have been restored to. The Scotch churches and some others, for instance, unwilling to diminish the significance of the table, bring forward the communicants in successive groups suited to the size of the table, administering the elements to each group by themselves. But in so doing they lose the equally necessary idea of communion, *together*, and at the same time as one family. They may, it is true, commune together in spirit, but the outward, visible form of the communion is not fully maintained. As the apostle says: "Every one taketh before other his own supper."

Some other churches, as our own, have adopted the opposite and scarcely less offensive plan of gathering as many as may be conveniently brought around the table, and allowing the rest to occupy the ordinary seats of the church, trusting that in their own minds they will consider themselves as at the table, while communing with their brethren and sisters there. Still the significance of the Lord's table is greatly impaired. Nor do we hesitate to say that the expedient is the reverse of edifying. Certainly, it should not be resorted to except by necessity. The table should be as large as possible, and no other seats occupied, but when it is filled. The aged or infirm may very well be allowed to keep their previous places,

for the gospel requires no painful ordinances; but others have no such excuse, and ought not to lose any benefit of the instructive figure. If the table be not large enough for all, those who cannot find places at it should at least change to others, that they in outward act as well as in thought go to the holy table.

Let it not be said that mere form is of little account, so that the heart be right. What is the external administration of the Lord's supper but a form? and ordained for the very reason that, in the wisdom of God, form is necessary to the exhibition of the Christian church to the world and to itself? and that the appointed sacraments, as outward visible forms, or signs or seals, are highly edifying, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, to those who profess Christ? The same argument that would do away with one part of the form would do away with the sacrament altogether; which is the case with the Friends or Quakers, who reject the outward sacraments, because, as they say, they spiritually receive the truths which those forms signify.

The Puritans, with all their other virtues and services to Christianity, did the cause of religion much harm by stripping the outward church of associations, which, from our human nature, God has mercifully and wisely employed for the edification and comfort of his people while yet in the body of flesh. As the Quaker rejects all colors but drab, though God has scattered variegated beauty on every side, so the Puritan rejected all but straight lines, though the graceful curve is seen in every leaf and wave and form of living creature. We may not, from our own fancy or taste, attempt to improve on the forms which God has appointed, or introduce supersensational novelties; but we should retain all the illustrations of truth he has given us, especially in the sacraments. We are weak creatures, wholly dependent on God's Holy Spirit through the means of grace for our upholding; and the church is compared to a vine which has not strength of its own to stand erect; but the vine clasps the supporting elm or trellis-work by its curling tendrils,—tendrils because they are tender, not by its trunk or stronger branches only. So every association of the sacrament has its uses to help the tender faith and clinging affections of the lowly-minded communicant, conscious of his own weakness, but clasping the strength of Christ. We are not Puritans, but of the Reformed churches.

Rejecting, as the Reformed churches do, the whole doctrine of the mass, the transubstantiation, and the sacrifice, and regarding the sacrament as a commemorative and illustrative supper or feast, we also reject the word priest, other than as applied to Christ, the High Priest, or to every Christian who offers thanks unto God; we also reject the word altar, believing that Christ in heaven is the only altar of his church, and we sit at the Lord's table as guests of Christ, and do not kneel in idolatry of what we believe to be mere emblems.

There are Protestant churches in which the terms priest and altar, with the kneeling posture at the eucharist, are retained, but they are remnants of a superstition which should be considered exploded, and guarded against accordingly. Luther, though he rejected the priesthood of the clergy, and the repetition of Christ's sacrifice, yet clung to the Popish doctrine so far as to claim for the elements a *consubstantiation*, as he termed it, with Christ's real person. So his followers retain the term altar, and kneel at it when receiving the sacrament. During the Reformation in England, under Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, the court politicians, and some clergy only half-converted from Rome, were anxious to conform the Protestant church as much as they could to the old superstition, that the prejudices of the people might not be shocked by too great a change of ritual. Hence, in spite of vigorous remonstrances from more determined reformers in the new English church, they forced upon it many things which had better have been abandoned, and among them the terms priest and altar, and this kneeling at the eucharist. No doubt, many pious people among them kneel around the altar without any remnant of idolatrous superstition, contending that kneeling is a most solemn posture, fitted for so solemn an act. But as it destroys the idea of communion at the table of the Lord, kneeling, though a fit posture in other devotional acts, has no fitness at the holy communion. It is a variation from our Lord's own method, and it gives favor to gross errors.

"CALVIN," the North-western correspondent of the Presbyterian, says:

A secret and wide-spread organization, known as the "Ancient Order of Druids," and composed of German and American infidels, recently held a grand annual gathering in Chicago. True alike to their infidel principles and their heathen name, and simply because they could defy both God and man, the members of this order held a grand picnic on the Sabbath, at which the attendance could not have been less than seven thousand. It is a poor satisfaction to be enabled to say that a large majority of these were Germans, whose reckless infidelity would make them dangerous citizens of any government; and that, without their aids American infidels would not dare thus to insult the feelings and principles of a large majority of their countrymen. We talk of the dangers which threaten our civil and religious liberties from Romanism. But we have an hundred-fold more to fear from German infidelity, and it is this, more than any other two forces combined, which will destroy our Sabbaths and subvert our government.

A COMMENTARY ON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. By John Peter Lange. Translated from the German by Philip Schaff, etc. Lange's, Braune's, and Frommiller's Commentaries on the Epistles of James, John, Jude, and Peter. Translated from the second improved German edition, by J. Isadore Mendenhall, D. D., Rector of St. James' Church, Lancaster, Pa. Chas. Scribner & Co., 654 Broadway, New York.

We have spoken of the previous volumes of this American-German commentary on the Scriptures in no measure of terms of praise. Nor do we find any occasion to take back anything we have said on examining this last issue of the series on the Epistles of James, John, Jude, and Peter. On the contrary, we are disposed to regard Frommiller and Braune as equally good practical commentators with Dr. Lange, and Dr. Mendenhall a better translator and emendator than Dr. Philip Schaff. For it is due to candor to say that our favorable opinion of this "Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical," as a whole, has been formed without reference to Dr. Philip Schaff's additions and emendations thereto. That his "vain repetitions" in the way of pointing out the defects of the Eibenburg, and the superiority of his own edition, after the style of a rival tradesman, worry and weary us. That his interpolations of sensational platitudes—such as his reminiscences of the battle of Gettysburg—among grave and solemn expositions of God's word, disgust us. That such fancies as his far-fetched citation of President Lincoln's inaugural, declaring it the "earthly echo" of the angel's song, "Glory to God—peace on earth," &c., shock us. And worse than all, such an *excessus* as he interpolates upon Matt. xii. 32, in advocacy of the doctrine of the possibility of pardon beyond the grave, strikes us as very foolish. The taking a distinction between the esoteric doctrine, which Dr. Schaff holds "as an article of hope and charity," and the exoteric doctrine, which he holds as of "faith and public doctrine," evinces, in our judgment, the special usefulness of Dr. Schaff to be a commentator. No earnest man, for instance, can trust Dr. Schaff as a guide to the knowledge of the gospel doctrines, when, after indicating his belief that the heathen may, after death, have the gospel offered to them and be saved, he assigns the following reason for not preaching his doctrine on that subject: "Everybody sees at once the cooling effect which the teaching of the possible conversion of the heathen in the future world must have with the popular mind upon the work of heathen missions." A Doctor who shuns to declare what he believes to be the whole counsel of God for fear of its "cooling effect on the popular mind," is simply a theological humbug. Neither the popular mind nor the scholarly mind has any use for such.

But the value of this cyclopaedic commentary on the Scriptures is not materially affected by Dr. Schaff's whimsical interpolations in one or more volumes of it. The conception of a commentary on the whole Scriptures by combining a series of special commentaries with additions from still another set of editing critics, is an admirable one. And that this method should be applied in the reproduction of foreign commentaries is of special advantage to American students in enabling them to study the Scriptures from the standpoint of foreign Protestant scholars, as well as from the standpoint of our native scholars. Of course, no student will expect to find in such a commentary only that which he may deem orthodox in doctrine, sound in judgment, and unexceptionable in religious sentiment. So far as we have been able to examine this fourth volume, we find it every way equal if not superior to either of the three preceding.

There are many fine religious without prayer. The degree of religion, will depend upon the depth and heartiness of prayer. It does not depend so much on the length, as the intensity of the mental activity. A few moments of real and absorbing address to God, will accomplish more for the Christian, in the way of arming him with spiritual power, than days or years of reflection without it. Hence, the ejaculatory prayer. In the brief instant, the eye of the creature catches the eye of the Creator, glances are exchanged, and the Divine power and blessings flow down into the soul.—W. G. Shedd.

It is not sufficient to commune with the truth; for truth is impersonal. We must commune with the God of truth. It is not enough to study, and ponder, the contents of religious books, or even the Bible itself. We must actually address the author of the Bible in entreaties and petitions. Dr. Shedd.



## Free Christian Commonwealth

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REV. STUART ROBINSON, Editor.  
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### The Relation of Miracles to Divine Revelations.

The suggestion was made in these columns some time since that the miracles of Jesus were in an important sense parables also. That they serve as *diagrams* to illustrate the methods of the spirit in healing, cleansing and restoring diseased, corrupt, blind and crippled souls. And therefore an exposition of Christ's miracle of healing with reference to their spiritual significance, would furnish a hand-book of Christian experience.

It was not intended however to detract in any degree from the importance of the miracles as the attestations of the messages from God to men. And in this day when the subtle rationalism of such men as Bushnell on one extreme, is found in alliance with the superstitions of Popery, to affirm that miracles did not cease with the closing of inspiration, it is the more important to study the relation of miracles to revelations from God.

"We know thou art a teacher come from God," said Nicodemus, "for no man can do the miracles that thou doest except God be with him." The principle enunciated by Nicodemus that no man could do these miracles which they did except God be with them is that upon which the Scriptures everywhere proceed. The short method of removing Moses' fears that the people would not believe him to have been sent by Jehovah, was to confer upon him a power of working wonders as a sign. The argument of Peter with the enemies of Jesus on the day of Pentecost to establish their guilt before God, was the simple fact that they had crucified a man approved, attested of God to be His messenger—by miracles and wonders and signs.

Nay, nor is it merely in the way of reasoning to convince the understanding but to convict conscience of deepest guilt that they refer to these miracles—"How shall we escape argues Paul—if we neglect a gospel attested by God himself, with signs and wonders and divers miracles?"

And Jesus though warning that false Christs, with lying wonders, shall arise—none the less asserts that the grand sin of his people consists in rejecting his works—for that evinces sin against light and hatred of God—"have seen and hated both me and my Father." This explains why so frequently the several terms used to denote miracles are used together in the same texts—Peter describes it as *signs and wonders*—(in the original, *"poieois, wondrous and signs"*)—and Paul—calls them "signs" and "wonders" and "divers miracles"—(in the original, *"poieois, wondrous, and signs"*)—as the terms severally express but one side of the truth—they are thus used together to describe it fully on all sides. It is *"ergon"*—"the work" that none but God can do. It is *"dynamis"*—"the power," as indicating the Almighty energy in the work; it is *"teras"*—"the miraculous"—the wonder, as indicating the effect of the work on the beholder. It is *"genion"*—"the sign"—as indicating the purpose of God to speak with men. Thus it is one complex idea described by various names according to its different signs. The elements furnished in various Scriptures suggest therefore this definition:—a miracle is an extraordinary or supernatural "work," done by the "power" of God, without the intervention of any known second cause, as a "sign" or proof of the presence of God in the work or with the deed of it as commissioned to speak in God's name revealing His will.

The miracle, in this sense is either the direct or the mediate extra-natural act of God. Direct, as when God acts in the creation of the world—or its destruction by water—or in the destruction of Sodom—and in the miracles during the era of the Theophanies generally—or, as in the resurrection of Christ. The miracle is mediate when God acts through some human agent, as Moses, Elijah, or the Apostles.

A miracle may also be pure or mixed. Pure, as when it is wholly supernatural, without reference to natural phenomena—as the fire called from heaven by Elisha—or when Christ raised the dead. Mixed, when the ordinary phenomena of nature are supernaturally used to produce miraculous results.

From this analysis it follows that a mere "wonder" is not a miracle in the Scripture sense. Nature is full of wonders.

Nor is a phenomenon even above nature, and not explicable from second causes, a miracle; since it is essential the thing should be a "sign," or proof of God's presence with, and his commission to the doer. Nor has a miracle any value in itself considered, except as it attests a revelation from God. It may be a mere "lying wonder" to deceive.

It will be perceived, therefore, that there is involved in the very idea of a miracle—a new revelation or message

from God to men;—and conversely, the idea of a direct message from God to men involves the idea of a miracle, a manifestation of God's "power" through the bearer of the message, as a "sign" that he is speaking as the bearer of a message from God.

It is very manifest, therefore, that when men claim to be doing miraculous things, it behooves them to show that they have some new message to substantiate by them. And, on the other hand, men that claim to speak by direct authority from God, as did prophets and Apostles, must show us the "signs" of an Apostle before we can receive them. The two ideas are inseparable in Scripture. It follows therefore, that the very reception of the Bible as a perfect rule of Faith, excludes the acceptance of any further miraculous manifestations. And to admit that a true miracle may have been wrought in our day, involves the idea that the Bible is not yet complete as our rule of faith. This very short and effective method with modern supernaturalism has been felt to be so utterly annihilating to many a pompous pretense, that we find of late, for the first time, a strong disposition to call in question the fact that the Bible is a finality, even by rationalistic fanaticism, without the pale of the Church of Rome. Why determine dogmatically, they say, that the Bible is a final revelation as we now have it?

In common with the Roman Catholics, they tell us the dogma is based on a strained application of the closing words of the Book of Revelation:—"If any man add to the things written in this book, &c."—a saying which may be supposed to apply only to that one particular book of the Bible, and not to the Bible as a whole. But we give that general interpretation and application to these words at the close of Revelation, not merely for what they are in themselves, nor from whom they are—but because they give expression to a great principle of the revelation "at sundry times," which we find running all through the Bible.

If asked wherefore we have determined that the revelation closes at that particular point, we answer, in general, once the Pentateuch only was the Bible, but with that Bible in their hands, Elisha and Elijah wrought miracles attesting a message from God, and added other revelations. Then the Old Testament only was the Bible. But Jesus and his Apostles added to it, working miracles to attest their authority. Then the Apostles did wonders to attest their right to add to the canon. Now we determine that it closed, and that no other revelations are to occur with the advance of society and be added on to the volume, for this very plain reason—that till the era of the Apostles, each revelation had made provision for another revelation to follow it. Moses called for a prophet to follow him in that revelation, expressly providing that he should be recognized as a prophet like unto him. And again in the revelations of the Old Testament that subsequently followed, every one still called for something additional yet to come. Malachi closes the Old Testament with a call for another messenger to go before the face of the great revealer. Now these calls were all fulfilled in the New Testament. The great burden of argument of Jesus and the Apostles goes to show that they were the messengers of God called for by the prophets of God before. But now they call for none to follow these Apostles. They say their times are "last times"—none to follow. This great fact has its utterance in those words at the end of the last book, and we say that in God's providence that book was arranged last in the canon with a view to give expression to the great fact that no more revelations are to be looked for till Christ's second coming.

When, therefore, anything purporting to be a miracle is now offered us, we readily determine its counterfeit character. As, when some bank gives notice that it has no notes in circulation of a given plate and letter—say of any later date than 1860—if one is offered purporting to be of that plate and letter, dated 1865, we give ourselves no trouble to scan, examine, search—we pronounce it, at once, bogus. So if no call for a further issue from God of revelation and promise, but notice given that issues ceased at a given date, we know it to be counterfeit.

Here, then, is our reason for regarding the Bible as a finality. The vision is sealed and shut up. For 1500 years revelation had been going on—each still calling for another to succeed it—till the "last times" of the Apostles, which made no call for any further. Nay, but this is not yet the full force of the argument. Suppose in case of the bank just now cited, the announcement had been made not only that it has no notes out of a given plate subsequent to 1860, but also the additional announcement that there are numerous counterfeits of that plate out, executed with great ingenuity. Now just that is the argument in this case. Instead of such notice of another to come, as that of Moses, of Nathan, of Isaiah, of Mala-

chi, there are notices of "false Christs and false prophets," and of lying wonders, and of "all deceivableness of unrighteousness." So we have a reason not only for our faith in Scripture, but for our want of faith in miracles with no message, that tell us of mere wonders—as of flying houses of Our Lady of Loretto—of winking Madonnas—of spirits from heaven whose fancy is ever to speak through wooden table legs, as though they retained in the realm of spirits a passionate remembrance of the good eating that belongs to the fleshly state—of revelators spiritual who cautiously select human wooden heads—the channel of their communications to men. All, all alike have this fatal flaw, that they are miracles without a God's message. They bring "a God upon the stage with no knot worthy a God to untie." They show a seal of the office with no mandate to vouch by it. We say at once, you have stolen the seal from the clerk, or counterfeited God's seal. He is not wont to allow it to be affixed to blank or nonsense. The like fatal flaw is found in all legends of saint-worship and these pretended miracles. Obviously, they misconceive of the nature and design of miraculous power. They make it a proof of sanctity in those who work the wonders. But a miracle has no relation to sanctity. Eminent servants of God, as Job, Abraham, David, Mary the mother of Jesus, did no miracles, while Judas and Balaam wrought miracles; and Jesus says: "Many will say, 'Lord, Lord, have we not done wonderful works in thy name?' To whom he will say, Depart, I never knew you."

As to the rationalism that affects to receive Christianity and deny its miracles, and ascribe them to mere natural causes, these evidently misconceive the fundamental nature of the gospel as distinct from natural religion, and that it is a religion of facts, to be proved by testimony, &c.

The claim of miraculous power, no matter under what guise it comes, and however smooth its pious phrase, is radical and essential infidelity. The very claim itself is antagonistic to all religion which receives the Bible as its rule of faith. Nor have any such pretensions any claim on any reasonable Christian man's attention for a single moment. No matter how wonderful—nay, no matter though really supernatural. The mere wonderfulness gives them no claim to any special attention, even in the way of novelty. Every one who has thought much has found himself surrounded with wonders, especially in the structure of the human soul and its mysterious workings. Nay, we may go still further than this. We might very consistently go so far as to admit these wonders to be really supernatural without at all affecting the argument. For we have been warned before that Satan's "signs and lying wonders may so resemble the true as to deceive the very elect." And therefore the very pretences to miraculous power in these times, the more plausible, the more they confirm the gospel prophecy.

**Scholia on the Minutes of the Cincinnati Assembly—No. 3.**

In immediate connection with the honor conferred on G. H. Stuart, Esq., should follow as scholium, No. 8. THE BILLING AND COING EXTRAORDINARY WITH OTHER ECCLESIASTICAL BODIES.

What was the cause of the profound interest taken in the Cincinnati Assembly by the New School Assembly, we can readily surmise. But what should have fired the hearts of the grand representative council of "the poor persecuted Baptists" at Chicago with such a flame of holy affection for the Assembly in session at Cincinnati, it is not so easy to divine. Possibly it may have been the convincing and edifying power of Dr. Dale's "Classic Baptism," recently issued, and the Baptist brethren begin to think Presbyterians half right. Whatever may have been the causes, however, here are the remarkable records—first, of the New School correspondence by telegraph (Min., p. 318).

The Permanent Clerk reported that he had received the following telegram: Rochester, May 20, 1867.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, holding its session in the city of Rochester, N. Y., sends fraternal and Christian salutations to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church holding its sessions in the city of Cincinnati, desiring and praying for the presence and benediction of the Great Head of the Church in all their deliberations and deliberations.

J. GLENN BULLEN, Stated Clerk.

This telegram was ordered to be entered on the Minutes, and the Permanent Clerk was directed to send back a telegram in a similar spirit.

An answer was sent accordingly, returning the same words precisely, with the addition of a prayer "for the guidance of the divine spirit" in the New School Assembly.

Next came the telegram from the Baptists, and the answer, as follows (Min., p. 356):

Chicago, May 27, 1867.

To the Rev. Dr. Gurley, Moderator of the General Assembly.

By an enthusiastic vote, the representatives of the Baptist churches, in Grand Reunion assembled, send Christian salutation to the General Assembly of the

Presbyterian Church now in session at Cincinnati, O.

H. THANE MILLER, Chairman.

To this the Permanent Clerk was directed to send a reply, and accordingly sent the following:

Cincinnati, O., Tuesday, 4 o'clock P. M., May 28, 1867.

Rev. H. T. Miller, Chairman Baptist Reunion.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, now in session at Cincinnati, with corresponding cordiality returns the Christian salutations of the representatives of the Baptist Churches in Grand Reunion assembled at Chicago.

R. D. GURLEY, Moderator.

Not having been within the charmed circle to catch the inspiration, of course these novel ecclesiastical sensations are perhaps not duly appreciated by us. But the event shows that we are not far wrong in judging that their practical value did not amount to much. "The fervent effectual prayer of the righteous man availeth much." But, whether from want of fervor or from want of righteousness in these New School and Baptist petitioners, nothing is plainer than that their prayers for the Cincinnati Assembly seemed to avail little toward staying its progress to a depth of folly and apostasy never attained by an American General Assembly before.

9. DISORDER AMID THE HARMONIES—CHICAGO SEMINARY.

Among the remarkable novelties in these records are the solemn official, ecclesiastical fisticuffs between the different pastors in the Boards of the Northwestern Theological Seminary, the like of which we have never before met with in records of General Assemblies. Thus, from the annual report of the present Directors of the Chicago Seminary, we select the following not very dignified criticism on the report of the Board of Directors last year:

The last annual report of the Board of Directors to the Assembly, as printed in the Minutes, contains, among other things, the following:

At the late meeting of the Board, by a vote of eleven against nine, it was resolved to ask the Assembly to transfer Dr. Lord to the "Cyrus H. McCormick Professorship of Didactic and Polemic Theology," and place a fourth Professor. The Assembly should know that the opposition to both these resolutions is very firm, and is from members who generally have been longest in the Board, and who have borne, and yet bear, the burden of the support of the Seminary. (See Minutes of 1866, p. 140.)

In respect of this, the Board would say that the "report" was prepared, and sent up to the General Assembly by a committee appointed for the purpose. That the part quoted above is erroneous in declaring the number of votes given, which was twelve to nine; and also a statement in regard to the reasons voting in the negative is one which the Board did not authorize, and which, on account of its unfavorable bearing upon Dr. Lord, we feel it our duty to disavow and disown.

Without expressing any opinion as to the propriety of the committee appointed to prepare this report it is due to truth and justice that this disclaimer be placed on record.

And in the report of the Board of Trustees of the same Theological Seminary to the Assembly, we find a similar animus toward the old Board:

Most of us were present at your last annual meeting of your Board, and heard the address of the retiring President, and we confess the surprise and sorrow with which we observed him aim to withhold from the public the names of those who have done so much to make our Seminary what it is. Should we withhold the expression of our dissent from known and tried friends of the institution are treated with manifest injustice, we should regard ourselves as parties to the wrong. Especially we feel constrained to attribute the present financial discouragements to the spirit then manifested and apparently carried out in the action of the committee on the subject matter of Theological Seminaries at the meeting of the last General Assembly at St. Louis.

Mr. McCormick, as we are credibly informed, intends to contest the demand for any further payment from him on his endowment fund, in view of the action and treatment he received at St. Louis, during the session of the General Assembly, which fact adds greatly to the present embarrassments which surround us on every hand.

This beautiful specimen of harmony and brotherly affection, be it observed, is the product of that delightful ecclesiastical climate about Chicago, where, judging from the North Western Presbyterian, one would suppose there is one perpetual sunshine, and the people are utterly horrified at such blazes as we have here in Kentucky. But with all the serenity that reigns about Chicago, it may well be questioned whether men who can indulge in this sort of fisticuff ecclesiastical in solemn official reports of their high trust from the Church are exactly the sort of models by which, and this the sort of atmosphere in which to train the rising ministry to that high sense of honor and official self-respect which heretofore has characterized Presbyterian ministers.

10. REPORTS AND ACTION CONCERNING DANVILLE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY—SOME REMARKABLE DEVELOPMENTS.

We have looked forward to the publication of the reports from the Board of Directors, the Board of Trustees, and the Emergent Professor of the fiscal and liturgical branches of Theology appointed by the Assembly of 1866 in the defunct Danville Theological Seminary. We had some curiosity to hear what message would come from a dead Seminary, that had left some two hundred thousand dollars behind it to pay funeral expenses, and perhaps for masses— if we may speak of a Presbyterian

Seminary in a Popish figure—for the repose of the dead.

From an item in the financial report, we are led to think that the cemetery expenses are rather heavy. It will be remembered that the Seminary closed sine die about April 20th, 1866; and that Dr. Breckinridge, sole surviving Professor, was put in charge of its effects and to watch the grave, by the Assembly in May, 1866. Yet, in the general account, which foots up the present assets of the Seminary at \$208,865 13, is found the following significant items:

Total amount in Treasury to April 20, 1867	\$17,594 02
Credit by Professors' salaries, due since April 20, '66	\$3,000 00
By gen'l expenditures	1,159 36
	\$4,159 36

Balance cash \$13,434 66

In the good old times, this sum of \$4,159 36 thus expended in support of this dead school, would have comfortably supported a good live one.

But this financial statement is a matter of far less interest than the "high moral" of the following resolution of the Danville Board of Trustees:

"Resolved, That the General Assembly, in its sequel in the state of Kentucky, which is pledged to hold, while exercising its power in the elections of Trustees, be asked to relieve this Board of any Kentucky members who may not be in connection with the Synod of Kentucky adhering to the General Assembly, and that it will be pleased to purge this Board of all existing Trustees who have taken part against the General Assembly."

So also the Board of Directors of the Seminary make the following remarkable report:

Some few members of this Board (of Directors) we have substantial reasons for believing are not hearty in sympathy with us who are loyal to the General Assembly and to the Church. For these reasons we would recommend to the Assembly that the number of this Board be reduced at least one-half.

We desire to call special attention to these remarkable propositions from men in Kentucky to a fanatical Northern Assembly—men who claimed to have all the fraternal affection, and still were claiming to be treated with all the courtesies due to Christian gentlemen.

It must be remembered that these recommendations were made before the action of the last Assembly. Especially is the attention of those amiable brethren called to this who were so shocked at our predictions of what these men would do, and our not very complimentary argument to show what they were capable of doing after reasonably conspiring to betray their own brethren and their own section of the Church into the hands of a faction which they pretended to detest. This, then, is the insulting requital of those members of the Board at Danville, and others of like moderate opinions for their being a clinging fast to their dear brethren in Kentucky, while they still felt bound to "take part against the Assembly."

This is the requital of the credulous charity that allowed itself to be humbugged by the pretence of these men that they were hostile to the Assembly's acts.

How far the Assembly heeded this very loyal request is plain enough from examining the list of names in the reconstructed Boards of Directors and Trustees. We make room for the entire rolls of the two Boards, for they will suggest other important reflections aside from the special purpose we have in view. The old Board of eighteen Trustees consisted of (Min., p. 415):

R. J. Breckinridge, E. P. Humphrey, J. T. Boyle, R. A. Johnstone, J. Barbour, A. A. Hogue, W. L. Breckinridge—ministers; and G. W. Welsh, T. E. Quisenberry, G. F. Lee, A. R. McKee, J. A. Jacobs, J. R. Hughes, Geo. Denny, G. Marshall, J. G. Barrett, O. Beatty, J. C. Maxwell—elders.

The new Board of eleven members consists of S. Yerkes, D. D., S. S. McRoberts, W. J. McKnight—ministers; and T. E. Quisenberry, George Denny, J. G. Barrett, O. Beatty, G. W. Welsh, A. R. McKee, John A. Jacobs, J. C. Maxwell—elders. (Min., p. 346.)

The old Board of fifty-four Directors is reduced down to the following new Board of thirty (Min., p. 345)—a very remarkable Board to direct the training of a ministry, especially as compared with the Boards that once directed the instructions of Professors in Danville Seminary:

MINISTERS—R. F. Caldwell, T. F. Cortelyou, J. T. Lapsley, George Morrison, J. L. McKee, D. D., W. L. Breckinridge, D. D., T. H. Clelland, R. A. Johnstone, Samuel J. Nicolls (the Converter man), John C. Young, R. W. Landis, D. D. (Professor), J. K. Lyle, S. D. Crothers, H. H. Allen, R. J. Breckinridge, D. D. (Professor).

LAYMEN—(We follow the Assembly's denomination of them)—Daniel Curry, B. N. Penick, E. A. More, S. R. Williams, R. Rodes, J. C. Maxwell (he who built the argument against us upon the miraculous egg), G. W. Welsh, George Denny, L. L. Warren, George Wood, T. T. Alexander, B. F. Avery, S. G. (we suppose J. G.) Barrett, Wm. Prather, J. C. Handolph.

This reconstruction of the Boards, as made under the request of the old Boards, to reduce so as to exclude all "not in hearty sympathy with us who are loyal to the General Assembly"—and "to purge this Board of all such as have taken part against the General Assembly"—presents a new list equally remarkable for what it contains and what it omits. It will

for instance surprise not a few of that class of Southern sympathizers who give one side the benefit of their sympathies and balance the account by giving the other side the benefit of their influence and co-operation—to find that in making up a list of those who have not taken part against the Assembly," but "who have been in hearty sympathy with those of us who are loyal"—the names of Messrs. McKee, Warren, Barrett, Prather, Welsh, W. L. Breckinridge, and others, should figure so conspicuously. Have not these men always repelled the charge with indignation that they were in sympathy with the Assembly?

Certain we are that we have heard the hint dropped a hundred times by their friends—particularly their friends of the Southern sympathy sort, that they utterly disapproved the doings of the Assembly, and had no sort of affinity for the "us who are loyal" of the genuine Danville loyalists! We are therefore reduced to the alternative of believing, either these gentlemen are not what their friends took them to be, or the Assembly's guides in this matter regarded them as of too little force, and having too little mind of their own, to be troublesome to the reconstructors at Danville. Or, to state the case more forcibly, either these gentlemen are now playing false with the Assembly, or they have been falsely humbugging their poor credulous dupes at home; or the Assembly supposes they have no principle, and can be used for its purposes better than honest men of either party. One horn of the dilemma must be chosen.

Our space forbids us to note as we intended other names remarkably entered in this list, for other reasons. We therefore pass to the remarkable omissions on these lists. We can see why such men as Messrs. Brank and Spillman—may even Mr. Worrall, are omitted.

But it strikes us as singular that though a place is found for all three of his former co-Professors, Dr. Humphrey is utterly ignored in this reconstruction of the Boards. Nothing is more natural than the inquiry here, what can be the matter? After all his tremendous sacrifice of conscience and character to prove his loyalty to the Assembly last year, is he now suspected of "not being in sympathy with us who are loyal"? Are the "us who are loyal" coming over to the opinion of the less loyal that Dr. H. "will not do to tie to?"

Then, to what has become of the venerable Dr. Matthews? Surely no one suspects his loyalty. What of the faithful A. A. Hogue? Of Condit? Of Coons? We can imagine that the brilliant McMillan might have been ignored on the score that sober wisdom

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## Free Christian Commonwealth

### REVIEWS.

THE STORY OF MARTIN LUTHER—EDITED BY MISS WHATELY. Presbyterian Publication Committee. Philadelphia. pp 354 16 mo. Price \$1 25.

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We have not yet read all of these essays. But that on the Temptation is worth the price of the volume.

THE OILED FEATHER SERIES. The Oiled Feather. Mr. Clippick's Clock. Stamp on it John. Croaking Kite and Chirping Dove. The Talking Fire Irons. The Eye Doctor. American Sunday-school Union. Philadelphia.

This is a case of most beautiful books for the children, designed more particularly to illustrate the advantages of an amiable and kind spirit. Of course we have not had time to read a whole library. But the children who have been poring over them, around us, pronounce

them "first rate." And this is a case in which we defer greatly to their judgment.

MAY I NOT? OR TWO WAYS OF LOOKING THROUGH A TELESCOPE. American Sunday-school Union.

Under this title, suggested by Nahman's query of the prophet, the writer in this little book presents in a very pointed manner, the nature and duties of the Christian life. The views of the writer on certain points may seem perhaps a little extravagant, but the extravagance is in the right direction; and the thoughts suggested will be found well worthy the consideration of young Christians.

For sale by Davidson & Robinson, No. 72 Fourth street.

### Condemned, or Pardoned?

The spiritual feebleness and indecision, and the worldly conformity which leave the dividing line between the Church and the world so indistinct, need not surprise us when we know that, among professing Christians, very few even profess to know that they are children of God, and that their teachers encourage doubt and distrust as most becoming to the Christian, or deride the assurance of salvation as arrogant fanaticism. One result of this doctrine has been to crowd the ranks of nominal Christianity with men whose hearts are in the world, but who have attempted to silence conscience by some good resolutions, which they style giving their hearts to God. They have "a hope," and they do not, for the present, desire any more intimate relation to God than such a distant hope involves. They shrink from such present nearness to Him as is implied in the apostolic view of the believer's position: "We have redemption through His blood; even the forgiveness of sins." "By grace ye are saved." "Now are we the sons of God."

That doctrine precisely meets the wishes of worldly professors. But to those who have been truly convinced of sin, the thought that it is unpardonable is intolerable, and the slightest suspicion about their acceptance of God in Christ must be torment. To those who, under the thralldom of such pernicious teaching, are traveling on in sorrow, asking, and vainly asking, "Am I His, or am I not?" we chiefly address ourselves, in the hope of satisfying them that it is as unscriptural as it is pernicious.

In the Scriptures, to be assured of forgiveness is represented as the normal, not the exceptional, condition of believers; instead of being impossible, it is the very thing implied in faith in Christ. We cannot here inquire into the condition of Old Testament saints. Our readers can at once recall some who could say with Hezekiah: "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." We find our Lord testifying: "He that believeth is not condemned." He sent His ambassadors to proclaim the remission of sins in His name, who testified: "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things." To believe what they preached as the word of God, was to be assured of salvation. It was a simple question of the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ and the veracity of God.

In the apostolic age, accordingly, the doubts and perplexities which are now regarded as characteristics of the Christian were unknown. Even for doubting Thomas, it was enough to be assured that Jesus was risen from the dead, and he at once exclaims: "My Lord and my God." With the first Christians, to believe was to rejoice; and they are continually addressed as assured of their salvation. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sin according to the riches of His grace." "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

On every page of the apostolic epistles we may find the proof that to believe was to be saved and to be assured of salvation; but it is impossible to find a syllable which rebukes the greatest boldness in Christ, or the most unhesitating confidence in the word of God as presumptuous. The very object of these epistles is to draw out the hearts of believers to the most unclouded certainty of their acceptance, to establish them in the knowledge and belief of the love of God hath to us, that they might know that they had eternal life. Some in our day go so far in defence of the strange view of Christian character which they have embraced, as to say that they would be without their doubts and fears for the world, even glorying in their shame. But in that day, doubt and distrust were rebuked as in the highest degree dishonoring to God. "Ifs that believeth not God hath made Him a liar," not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record which God gave of His Son; and this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

The assurance of forgiveness which they enjoyed was not based on any superiority of their own character. Among them were about three thousand; to whom Peter said: "Him ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." And after the murderers of the Lord, we need not wonder if we find among them the bitterest persecutors of His Church, the most polluted idolaters, as well as the proudest Pharisees; in short, the chief of sinners. No aggravations of sin could outweigh the preciousness of the sacrifice of Christ—no sin of crimson dye could withstand the cleansing efficacy of His blood. It was enough for them to know that God had poured out His righteous wrath upon sin at the Cross, in order that He might pour out His righteous love upon them forever. However great their sin, the only question was, Has Christ satisfied God for it? and the answer was found in the fact that God raised Him from the dead. The ground of their assurance was that Christ's work is finished and God's word is true. "They rejoiced in Christ Jesus, and had no confidence in the flesh."

The ground of their assurance is not invalidated. But men are now taught to seek assurance in their own experience, attainments, life, or feelings. We perfectly agree with them, that assurance of salvation derived from any such source would be the height of presumption; and to all, except the spiritually blind, the result of the search must be a terrible uncertainty. On the other hand, when the question is not about self, but about the work of Christ and the word of God, faith is humility, and distrust is arrogance. "Here only can the question ever be settled: it is not what I have experienced, but what Christ has done; it is not what I feel, but what God says."

After doubt is hunted from every other refuge, a troubled soul will often say: "If I only knew that I had faith, I could have perfect confidence." Yes, dear friend; but confidence in what? Not in Christ, but in your faith. It is the old attempt to find something in self when you go thus to search for your faith. What is it you seek for? What is this faith? Is Christ's work finished? Is God satisfied, and are you satisfied with it? Is Jesus, at the right hand of God, worthy of your confidence? Do you confide in Him? Is God's word true when He says, "He that believeth on Him is justified from all things"? If your heart answers "Yes," that is faith—that is assurance of forgiveness complete as the sacrifice of Christ—certain as the truth of God. "Does thy conscience demand something more to satisfy it than that which has satisfied the inflexible justice of God? Is not the ground on which God reveals Himself a righteous justifier, sufficient for thee to stand upon as a justified sinner?"

All our readers are either condemned or justified, and it is not a matter to be left for a moment in doubt which you are. Amid all varieties of character and degrees of criminality, one thing makes all the difference between the pardoned and the condemned. "He that believeth is not condemned; he that believeth not is condemned already."

The Witness.

### Punishing Children.

In multitudes of cases parents have made hasty and furious and utterly groundless charges against a child, which has so taken it back that it could make no reply, and this has been taken as a tacit confession of guilt, and the next question proposed in fury is, "what do you do for it?" And the child being thus confused and more alarmed, cannot summons presence of mind and composure enough to make a denial, and as the only alternative bursts into a kind of hysterical crying. Many parents are of such a temperament that, a child cannot be induced to utter a word under a scolding, they become more enraged, and utter threats which are a disgrace to civilization; we have heard them themselves from affectionate, indulgent and Christian parents. "I'll knock you down with a log of wood." "I'll break every bone in your body." "I'll heat you within an inch of your life," and other similar hecatombs of expression from educated, civilized minds; at least they passed for such in the great world.

There is one safe rule always applicable in the reproof of children; never speak so loud to them that a third person, ten feet away, could hear what was said. Any angry feeling is intensified by a loud utterance. Another good rule is, do not reprove or correct a child in the presence of any third person, or if so, let it be done in a soft, low, affectionate tone. A third precaution, and it is not a minor one either, is, do not reprove on the instant; wait a few hours, if not until next day, or better still in many cases, defer it until the occasion is about to occur when the fault might likely be repeated. Any intelligent and observant housekeeper knows that if a steak is put on the table this morning burned to a crisp, bouncing up from the table, running into the kitchen, and blazing away at the cook is neither lady-like, nor wise, nor polite. But next morning just before the steak is about to be cooked, be in the kitchen, and ask that it be not overdone as yesterday, with some word of encouragement; whatever servant is not managed in this way had better be dismissed. Now children are as ignorant as servants; the minds of both are weak and may be easily made perverse alike. Be assured, reader, that if you make it an inflexible rule never to scold above a whisper, you will never outrage your child's feelings, or fracture its skull by a blow dealt in ungovernable fury.—Hall's Journal of Health.

"I Just Laid Down on the Promises."

Such was the artless but most significant expression of a coal stoker who had found Jesus. He had just been a battle while in the army, or when his fears of dying had been aroused, only to fall back again into his old evil courses when the impression of danger had passed. For a year past, in frequent conversations, he had professed to believe in Jesus, but without also believing that his sins were forgiven; nor could any explanations of how God had indissolubly joined believing with the remission of sins and eternal life move him. While he professed to believe, yet he knew that he had not eternal life, and "made God a liar" by not believing "the record that God gave of His Son." And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." (See carefully 1 John v: 10, 11.)

A few days ago, however, as he stood in his fire-pit, he realized vividly his spiritual danger, and with tears of agony cried to the Lord. He had often before fruitlessly prayed, and it came to him that his prayers would not save him. Then returned to him the teaching, before apparently wasted, that by faith, and faith only, could he be saved, and he energetically exclaimed, "I will believe—yes, I do believe that Jesus died for me," and immediately he was filled with a sense of all that Christ had done for him, that he had given on his wheel-barrow handle and swept freely like a child; tears no longer flow of agonizing dread, but of sorrow that he had lived for thirty-nine years in rebellion against Christ, who through it all had been preserving him from death.

at home or in war, and still waiting that he might be gracious to him!"

"In reply to the question as to what his real condition had been when he professed to believe in Jesus, yet without the forgiveness of sins, he said:

"I thought that I believed in Jesus; but I was all the while trusting in my self; it was what I was to do that was to carry me to heaven, though of course I could not tell that such a person as Jesus Christ had lived. But O, when I trusted him, then I knew that all my sins were surely taken away, and I had to go and tell the men around the factory how Jesus had done it all. I became a Christian when I just laid down on the promises."

### Another Visit of Jesus.

A large number of people had assembled on the shores of a lake to meet Jesus. He had been away, and they were expecting him to return. They desired to hear his instructions, and were anxious for their friends afflicted with disease to be healed. And they had, doubtless, brought their sick friends with them. And it came to pass that when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him; for they were all waiting for him.

Dear reader, how is it in your town? Jesus was with you once, but he has been gone for a time. And are you all now waiting for him to come back? Do you desire him to return? Will it not be a blessed thing to have a visit from Jesus just now? You and your Christian brethren would all be built up in the faith. Your drooping graces would be revived. Your cold hearts would be warmed with the fires of divine love. Many of your friends, sick with the terrible disease for sin, would be restored to spiritual health. Jesus alone can cure the sin-sick soul. Do you indeed desire a visit from him? And are you expecting Jesus to return? The people of Capernaum were looking for him. Are you on the look-out in your church, really expecting a visit? Not to expect him shows an amount of unbelief which may keep him away.

And then, are you ready for Jesus? True waiting is made up of desire, expectation, and readiness. Perhaps it would conflict with your arrangements for business or pleasure to receive a visit from Jesus just at present. Or are you now, this very day, all in readiness? Is your heart fully prepared to receive a blessing? Are the cases of your friends all ready to be presented to him for restoration? And shall the record be soon made respecting your city: "And it came to pass that when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him; for they were all waiting for him?"—Mo. Presbyterian.

Henry Ward Beecher is very thankful that he is a preacher. Some of his reasons for thankfulness will perhaps appear novel to a minister who feels that he is himself accountable for the faithful discharge of his duty. H. W. B. has evidently found his profession a paying one. Hear him:

I have occasion to thank God that I am a minister of the Gospel. If I had presented to me all the different professions that a man could name, with the most flattering prospects, I do not know of one calling in life that would tempt me for one moment. My impression is that, when I cease to be a minister, I shall not be anything in a professional way—that I shall resort to farming and manual work. Of all intellectual professions, nothing seems to pay, as it goes, like the minister's calling. There is nothing that is so noble; there is nothing that is so satisfying; there is nothing that involves so little care. I feel that I have great cause for thankfulness when I see how much I am favored above lawyers, above physicians, above merchants, above professional men and business men generally. They bear ten burdens where I do one. I sometimes hear ministers talk, with hanging head and downcast face, about their responsibilities, about their cares, about the great burdens they bear. I wonder what they are made of. I do not know what sort of a ministry they are in. I never found such cares and burdens. I have found ten joys where I have found one care in the ministry. I have found more pleasure, a hundred times, than pain. I cannot conceive of any vocation that so fills the measure of manhood in every respect. I love the Christian ministry. I did when I was a poor missionary in the West, preaching from log-house to log-house, and I have since. I have always loved it, and I never before loved it so much as I do now.

### Hints for Trustees of Churches.

A Montreal letter-writer gives the following description of the manner in which the Congregational church in that city levies and collects its pew-rents:

"For instance, if two men should indicate a desire to make that church their place of worship; they would have choice of all the vacant pews. Then each man would be asked to name the sum which he could afford to give weekly toward the expenses of the church. If one could pay a dollar and the other ten cents, well and good; the word of each man is the standard of his ability. In the pews are linen bags or envelopes, with the occupant's name and number, in which he is to place his weekly offering. The house is free to strangers, but this plan allocates the regular attendants, and avoids the great objection to free seats. The deacon informed me that the plan was incomparably more successful than the old one of renting pews. Men who could not give ten dollars a year could give twenty cents a week very easily. Besides, they aim to have all the children weekly contributors to the church. Little and often is the motto. When the congregation moved to their present place of worship, the families of the parish were allowed to select their seats in order, the oldest first. The deacon remarked that the only difficulty met with was, a family not as liberal as they ought to be had now and then one of the best

seats, to the discomfort of some one else paying much larger; but on the whole, he was enthusiastic over the success, after a trial of several years."

## For the Children.

### True Forgiveness.

"Why should I do it?" This was the question which Lucy Allen put to herself, as, on her way home from school one afternoon in June she reclined among the sweet flowers on a beautiful hill-side. To explain this it will be necessary to go back a few hours. That morning, when Lucy entered the school-room, she found that her slate, which she had carefully washed the day before, so as to be all ready for work, had, during her absence, been taken from its place, besmeared with some greasy substance, and then replaced. It was time for school to open, so that she was obliged to leave her slate until after this was done. For the moment she felt irritated, but controlling her feelings, she set to work diligently to remedy the evil. It was no easy task, and many a precious moment was wasted before the slate was fit to use. At length it was over, and she opened her desk for her arithmetic and pencils, but to her surprise all the points were broken off. She was at a loss to determine the author of this mischief, for she had frequently before suffered like annoyance, and a glance at one of the girls confirmed her suspicions. The blood mounted quickly to her cheeks, and she was on the point of going to her teacher and making known to him what had been done, but a sober second thought convinced her that she had better not particularly as she had no proof to offer in support of such an accusation. The evil could not then be cured. So with a strong effort she checked the angry feeling that had arisen, and let the matter pass, unknown to any but herself and the offender, as she had often done before. It was peculiarly trying at this time, as there was a certain portion of the arithmetic which she wished to finish before the coming holidays. Full twenty minutes had passed before she was ready to commence her work, and then with all her diligence she was unable to complete the part she had marked off for the day. The remainder of the time passed unsatisfactorily. She felt that her unkind feelings towards her tormentor, Annie Brooks, had not passed away, and she was dissatisfied with herself. After school was over, as she was preparing to return home, she heard Annie asking one of her schoolmates if she could tell her how to make a certain kind of bead bag, which was then very much used. The girl told her no, and Lucy knew that she herself was the only one in school who could do it. The thought came across her mind that she might show Annie, but as she remembered the occurrences of the morning, she asked herself, "Why should I do it?"

The question troubled her during all the walk, and while pausing at her favorite resting-place by the brook. When she reached home, there were so many things to engage her attention that it passed from her thoughts. When she retired to her room at night, however, the question returned to her. She could no longer put it off—it must be met. She could not rest quietly, feeling that she had not forgiven her schoolmate. In vain she tried to persuade herself that she was not angry with her, that she would do nothing to harm her; it would not do. Conscience whispered that there was a way in which she might benefit Annie of which she would not make use, and that therefore she did not feel a true forgiveness.

"Ought not I," thought she, after turning the matter over and over, "ought not I to prove to her that my love to Christ is not mere profession, by obeying his commandment and returning good for evil? It may be that she too may be benefited by it, and may learn to follow him."

Right was at last victorious, and after earnest prayer that her resolution might not be forgotten, but that she might have strength to carry it out, she jumped into bed and was soon in a peaceful slumber. She was early at school the next morning, and to her joy found that only Annie Brooks had arrived. Speaking pleasantly, she went up to her, and telling her that she had heard her say she wanted to know how to make bead bags, she offered to show her. Annie was taken by surprise, and would willingly have refused. But she was very anxious to learn, and knew not how to decline so kind an offer. The work was not hard to do, and before many of the girls had arrived, Annie had learned how to go on with it by herself. As Lucy was leaving her, Annie looked up, as if she wanted to ask her something.

"Is there anything more you want to ask me about it?" said Lucy.

"No, nothing about this, only did you know—" and here she hesitated. Lucy saved her the mortification of finishing the sentence.

Yes; but that cannot be helped now—let us think no more about it." Again Lucy was turning away, when Annie called her back.

"May I ask you what made you do this for me?"

Here the bell rang, and as it was against the rule to speak after this, Lucy playfully put her hand on her lips, and went to her seat, feeling very thankful that she had been enabled to gain this victory over herself, and to do good to one who had wronged her. As they read their morning's lesson from the Bible, Annie turned and looked blushing at Lucy. Annie had found there in one of the verses an answer to the unanswered question which she had asked of Lucy. The words were these: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."

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